



OSWER Innovations Pilot

Entering Institutional Controls Into One-Call Systems

The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) Assistant Administrator Marianne Horinko in December 2001 initiated a series of innovative pilots to test new ideas and strategies for environmental and public health protection to make OSWER programs more efficient, effective, and user-friendly. A small amount of money is set aside to fund creative proposals submitted by OSWER Headquarters and Regional employees. EPA employees are encouraged to talk to States, Tribes, local governments and external stakeholders about proposal ideas and partner on a project. The creative projects test approaches to waste minimization, energy recovery, recycling, and land revitalization that may be replicated across various sectors, industries, communities, and regions. We hope these pilots will pave the way for programmatic and policy recommendations by demonstrating the environmental and economic benefits of creative, innovative approaches to the difficult environmental challenges we face today.

BACKGROUND

At many environmental cleanups under federal, state, and local agency jurisdiction, residual contamination and engineering controls remain after cleanup has been completed. In such situations, the lead environmental agency typically requires the site to obtain legal or administrative tools to limit the use of the site so that contaminated areas or cleanup components already in place are not disturbed. While these “institutional controls” perform a vital function, the protections they provide may be disturbed during major land-use changes. Thus, future construction activities, including site excavation, well construction, and grading pose a risk of unknowingly disturbing the contaminated area in violation of institutional controls. Although institutional controls are important components of the cleanup plan, they often are implemented, monitored, and enforced by an entity other than the one completing the cleanup. This separation of responsibility for the implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of institutional controls requires active management to ensure all are aware of the controls.

States have established one-call systems since the 1960s to help excavators identify the location of buried utility lines. The States recognized the need for these systems to prevent damage to underground facilities and to protect the public and environment from uncontrolled

excavation. The one-call infrastructure might also work to notify these same excavators of underground institutional controls.

PILOT APPROACH

The Office of Emergency and Remedial Response, in partnership with EPA Region 3, EPA Region 5, the State of Wisconsin, and the State of Pennsylvania, will test the viability of including sites with institutional controls into state one-call systems. The pilot will conduct focused research into how sites are entered into the state one-call systems of Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. This information will be used to test the entry of institutionally controlled sites into one-call systems, test one-call system variations, and test various methods to receive, manage, and respond to location requests. Pilot successes and lessons learned will be disseminated across the country.

INNOVATION

This pilot expands the scope of services provided by the one-call systems to include environmental considerations. The pilot builds on existing state and federal authorities and focuses on the areas where there is significant agreement on the merits of one-call systems.

BENEFITS

The pilot will develop information that will help prevent excavation, grading, well drilling, and other future site activities from contacting contaminated soil, groundwater, or cleanup-related components, thereby reducing risks to the health and safety of site excavators, government personnel, and the public. One-call systems can be an important institutional control management tool that will ultimately increase the effectiveness and long-term reliability of remedies that manage waste in place. The pilot also will assist revitalization efforts by making information needed for property transactions more readily available. Information on institutional controls is a major need in the environmental assessments commonly used by lenders and developers to evaluate the environmental risks of purchasing and developing properties. Having that information readily available will speed up property transactions.

CONTACTS

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For additional information, visit the EPA OSWER Innovations web site at: www.epa.gov/oswer/IWG.htm